avail the exemptions under the stated notification. This option can be exercised once during the year.

However, at the time of moving the Finance Bill, 1997 in the Lok Sabha, the Finance Minister has stated that after consultation with the SSI sector, an alternative scheme would be notified under which the SSI units will be eligible to avail of MODVAT even while paying concessional excise, duty under the existing dispensation. For the present, the scheme which came into force from 01.04.1997 continues to operate.

[Translation]

Tribunals for pending Cases

6677. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether some tribunals had been set up with the of removing delay in justice and providing justice expeditiously;

if so, the dates on which these tribunals had been set up;

(c) whether the said objectives has not been achieved;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) the number of cases pending in each tribunal, till date; and

(f) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to streamline the functioning of these tribunals ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) to (f) A number of Tribunals have been set up by the Government under various Acts for dealing with cases arising under these Acts. These Tribunals are under the administrative control of various Ministries/Departments of Government of India. The Law Commission of India has undertaken a study on the functioning of the Tribunals.

(b) & (e) The Income-tax Appellate Tribunal and the Foreign Exchange Regulation Appellate Board which are under the administrative control of the Ministry of Law and Justice were set up on 25.1.1941 and 1.1.1974 respectively. The number of cases pending in the Income-tax Appellate Tribunal (as on 1.5.1997) and the FERA Board (as on 13.5.1997) are 3,01,034 and 4,408 respectively.

[English]

Grant of New Registration to Farmers by Tobacco Board

6678. SHRI L. RAMANA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the methods followed by Tobacco Board for granting new registration to farmers in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether the field officers are unable to help to the tobacco farmers; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to improve the situation and functioning of the Tobacco Board in Andhra Pradesh ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Tobacco Board grants registration to the tobacco farmers under the relevant provisions of the Tobacco Board Act, 1975 and the Tobacco Board Rules, 1976. The Tobacco Board each year fixes the crop size of FCV tobacco and lays down the policy for regulating its production keeping in view the international and domestic demand and carry over stocks, if any. Registration Committee of the Board lays down criteria for registration/reneeal of registration keeping the production policy of the Board in view. Notice inviting applications for renewal of registration or for grant of new registrations are given wide publicity in the local press and are also displayed on the notice board of all Tobacco Board offices.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Coal Washeries

6679. SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY :
SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE :

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) the details of new coal washing capacity added through modernisation/capacity expansion/establishment of new coal washeries during the last three years and investment made thereon;

(b) whether production of washed coal remained stagnant during the last three years;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the estimated demand for washed coal during 1997-98 and the Ninth Plan period and new policy

initiatives taken/action plan worked out to step up production of washed coal substantially during 1997-98 onwards ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) No new coal washing capacity has been added during the last three years.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The main reasons for near stagnancy in washed coal production are as under :-

(i) Most of the washeries are old and are designed to process better quality coals. Due to depletion of these reserves over the years, the ash content in the raw coal feed has increased affecting the performance of washeries considerably.

(ii) Inadequate raw coal feed to washeries.

(iii) Frequent power failures.

(d) Demand for washed coal (including direct feed coal) on Coal India Limited for the steel sector as assessed by the Planning Commission for 1997-98 is 11.36 million tonnes and for the terminal year of Ninth Five Year Plan (2001-02) the projected demand is 12.26 million tonnes.

Steps taken/proposed to be taken to step up indigenous availability of coking coal are as under :-

(i) Two new washeries under advanced stage of construction at Madhuband (BCCL) and Kedla (CCL) are likely to be commissioned during 1997-98.

(ii) Increasing raw coking coal availability by reorganising existing mines and development of new mines.

(iii) Modification of the existing coking coal washeries to improve the capacity utilisation as well as the quality of washed coking coal.

(iv) Increasing raw coal feed to washeries by supplying low volatile medium coking coals of suitable quality.

(v) Exploitation of coking coal by Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) from captive mining block offered by CIL.

Export of Cashew Kernel

6680. SHRI P.C. CHACKO : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the export of cashew kernel is undertaken by private agents;

(b) if so, whether the cashew kernel exporters are ignoring the request of Kerala State Cashew Development Corporation;

(c) if so, the policy of the Government in this regard;

(d) the total quantum and value of cashew kernel exported to erstwhile Russia during the last three years, year-wise;

(e) the details of exporters to whom the permission to export cashew kernels have been given by the Government during the said period;

(f) whether the Government of Kerala has also recommended the export of cashew kernels through KSCDC; and

(g) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) As per the current Export Import Policy, export of cashew are allowed freely without any restriction. It is the policy of the Government to encourage export of cashew kernels through both public and private sector companies without any discrimination.

(d) and (e) The total quantity and value of cashew kernels exported from India to Russia during the last three years are as under :-

Year	Qty. (In Mts.)	Value (in Rs. Crores)
1994-95	5531	92.10
1995-96	14905	263.30
1996-97	405	5.70
(April '96 to Feb. '97)		

During 1995-96, a ceiling of 6000 Mts for export of cashew kernels to Russia under the Rupee Escrow/Debt Repayment Mechanism was released subject to registration of contracts with Cashew Export Promotion Council.

(f) and (g) Yes, Sir. Government of Kerala was advised to encourage exports of cashew kernels through Kerala State Cashew Development Corporation as the items was freely exportable.